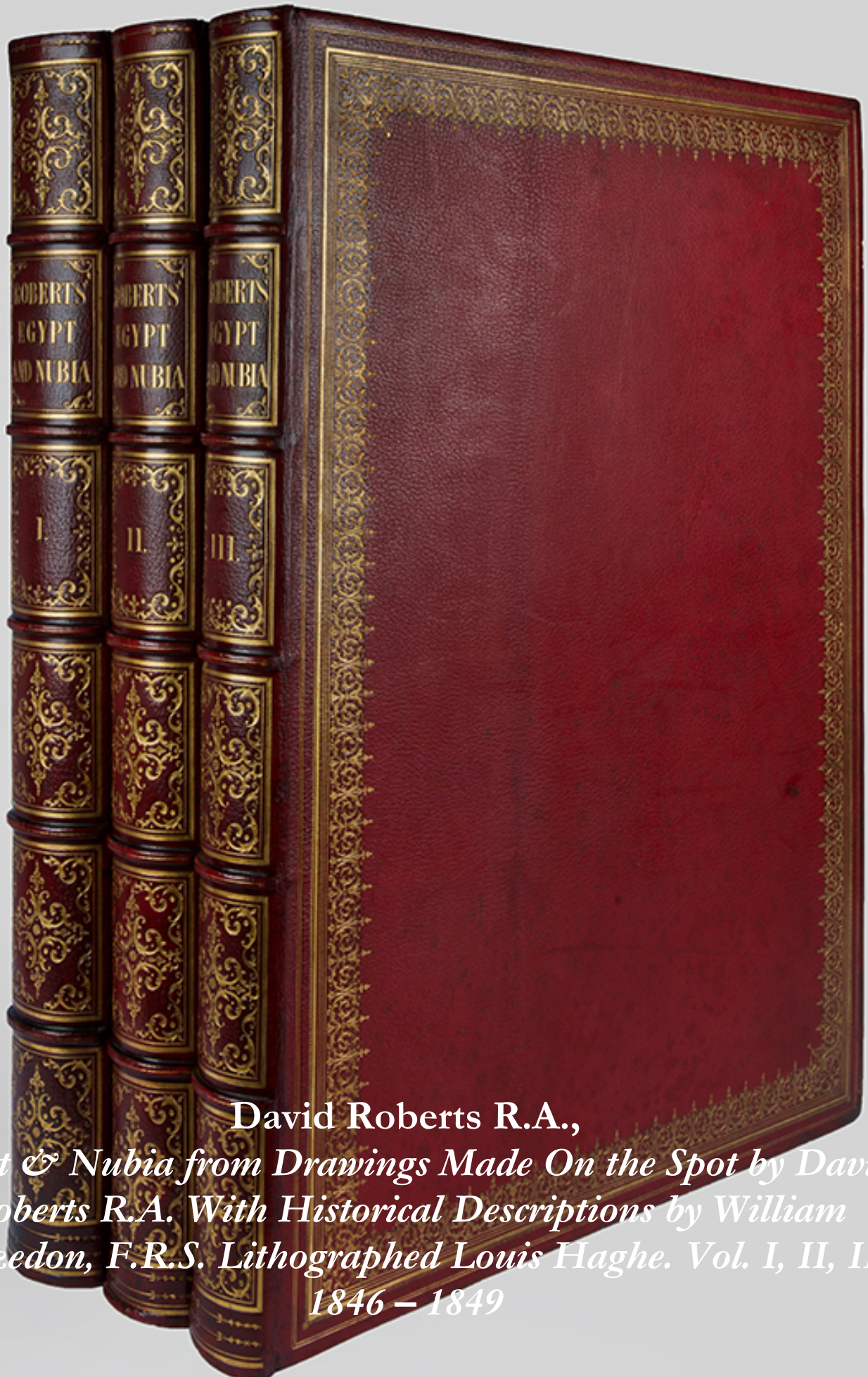


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David Roberts R.A.,
*Egypt & Nubia from Drawings Made On the Spot by David
Roberts R.A. With Historical Descriptions by William
Brockedon, F.R.S. Lithographed Louis Haghe. Vol. I, II, III,
1846 – 1849*

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DAVID ROBERTS, R.A.
(Edinburgh 1796 – 1864 London)

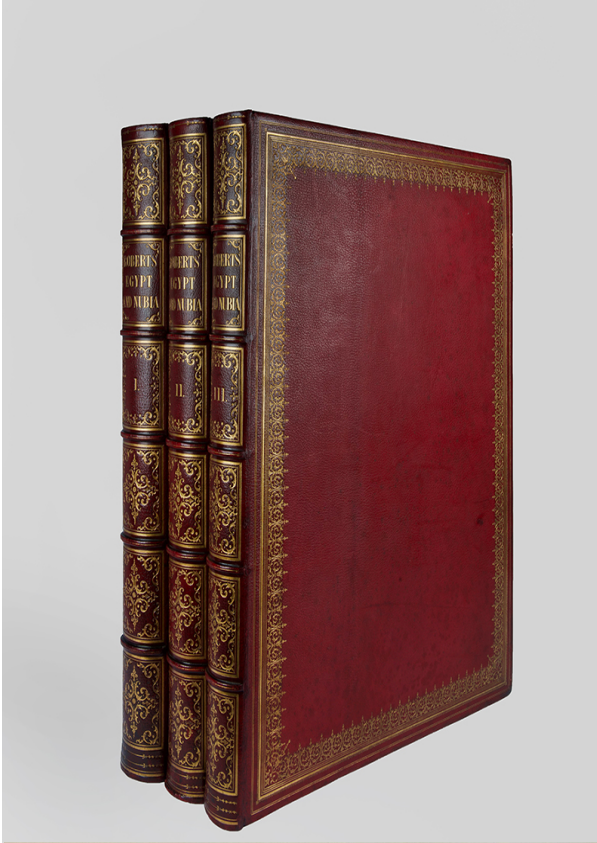
EGYPT & NUBIA, FROM DRAWINGS MADE ON THE SPOT BY DAVID ROBERTS R.A., WITH HISTORICAL DESCRIPTIONS BY WILLIAM BROCKEDON, F.R.S, LITHOGRAPHED BY LOUIS HAGHE. VOLS. I – III, 1846 – 1849

London: F.G. Moon, 20.
Threadneedle Street, Publisher in Ordinary To Her Majesty., MDCCXLVI. (- MDCCCXLIX.), Day & Haghe (Day & Son) Lithrs. to the Queen.

3 volumes, large folio. Contemporary red half Morocco by M. Ogle & Son of Glasgow, spines with 6 raised bands, each decorated with triple gilt fillets, compartments richly hilt and lettered direct, sides and corners trimmed with quadruple gilt fillets, placard pattern marbled sides, pale primrose surface-paper, endpapers, gilt edges.

With 121 tinted lithographed plates, 61 full-page and 60 half-page, with three vignette titles; the plates with original hand-colour, cut to the image and mounted on card in imitation of the watercolours, as issued, mounted on guards throughout.
60 x 43 cm (23 1/2 x 16 3/4 in.)

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David Roberts's monumental *Egypt & Nubia* represents one of the defining achievements of nineteenth-century illustrated publishing and one of the most influential visual records of Egypt produced during the Victorian period. Issued by F. G. Moon in three sumptuous folio volumes between 1846 and 1849, the publication translated Roberts's observations from his celebrated journey through Egypt into a sequence of lithographs of extraordinary scale and ambition. Produced in collaboration with the Belgian-born lithographer Louis Haghe and accompanied by historical descriptions by William Brockedon, the work united travel, archaeology, architecture and landscape within what became one of the most ambitious publishing enterprises devoted to Egypt in the nineteenth century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art notes that Roberts's Near Eastern journeys ultimately supplied the material for hundreds of watercolours and the extensive series of lithographs published between 1842 and 1849.

Roberts arrived at Alexandria in 1838 and proceeded to Cairo before travelling south along the Nile, journeying as far as Nubia and the Second Cataract. His route brought him before monuments that were becoming increasingly important to the European understanding of ancient Egypt: the temples of Karnak and Luxor, the monumental remains at Thebes, Philae, Edfu, Kom Ombo, Abu Simbel and numerous other sites along the Nile. Working rapidly before his subjects, Roberts produced drawings and watercolours that recorded not only the surviving architecture but its relationship to the landscape, local populations and the changing effects of light. His images thus combine a strong documentary impulse with the compositional instincts of a professional landscape painter.

Roberts's achievement should not, however, be understood as straightforward archaeological transcription. His finished compositions frequently heighten scale, atmosphere and spatial drama, and the human figures placed among colossal pylons, columns and statues serve to emphasise the overwhelming monumentality of ancient Egyptian architecture. It is precisely this combination of observation and artistic orchestration that gave the published images their enduring power. They preserve views of monuments before many of the transformations brought about by later excavation, restoration and tourism, while simultaneously expressing the nineteenth-century European fascination with Egypt as a landscape in which antiquity appeared visibly embedded within the contemporary world.

The transformation of Roberts's original drawings into lithographs was entrusted to Louis Haghe, one of the outstanding practitioners of the medium in nineteenth-century Britain. The Metropolitan Museum has characterised Haghe as among the finest and most prolific lithographers of his generation; his ability to reproduce Roberts's subtle architectural detail, atmospheric recession and tonal effects was essential to the success of the publication. The resulting plates possess a remarkable range, moving

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from panoramic views of the Nile and desert to closely observed architectural interiors and vast temple façades.

The present set is particularly distinguished by its original hand-coloured plates, representing the rarest and most luxurious form in which *Egypt & Nubia* was issued. Rather than retaining the more usual tinted lithographic format, each image was carefully coloured by hand, cut to the edge of the composition and mounted upon card so as to approximate the appearance of an original watercolour.

Christie's likewise describes this hand-coloured, card-mounted issue as the "finest and rarest" form of Roberts's monumental work. The effect brings the published plates unusually close to the immediacy and luminosity of Roberts's original drawings, while simultaneously transforming the volumes into luxury objects intended as much for visual contemplation as for reading.

The physical presentation of the present three-volume set further reflects this exceptional character. It is bound in contemporary red half morocco by M. Ogle & Son of Glasgow, the spines divided by six raised bands decorated with triple gilt fillets, with richly gilt compartments and lettering directly to the leather. Quadruple gilt fillets frame the sides and corners, while placard-pattern marbled boards, pale primrose endpapers and gilt edges complete an appropriately sumptuous ensemble.

Published during a period of rapidly expanding European interest in Egyptology, Roberts's *Egypt & Nubia* profoundly shaped the nineteenth-century visual imagination of the Nile Valley. More than a travel book, it stands at the intersection of fine art, archaeology and the history of printmaking. In this exceptionally rare hand-coloured issue, Roberts and Haghe's achievement acquires particular immediacy: the monumental landscapes and ancient architecture of Egypt are transformed into images that retain the authority of observation while possessing the refinement and visual presence of individual works of art.

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